MONATLICHER INFORMATIONSBRIEF ÜBER EVANGELISATION

A MONTHLY LETTER ABOUT EVANGELISM

LETTRE MENSUELLE SUR L'ÉVANGÉLISATION

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Our first "Monthly Letter" after the summer months is devoted to information about the work of the Department on Evangelism during the past year.

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STUDY ON THEOLOGY FOR EVANGELISM

The Department has completed a major stage of its study on theology for evangelism, and is glad to notify our readers of the resulting document, "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism". The document appears as the October 1959 issue of the Division of Studies Bulletin of the World Council of Churches and is available at the price of Sw.Frs.1.25, $-.30, 2/- shillings per copy.

This study has grown out of ten years work in this field. The many conferences and consultations, the visits, the books and pamphlets which have appeared over this period, as well as the work of the two World Assemblies of the W.C.C. have shown that in many quarters in the churches there is uncertainty and confusion concerning the meaning of the faith for evangelism. They have revealed, moreover, that frequently questions of organization, programme and technique, have been so highly emphasized as to deflect attention from the crucial theological questions which lie behind faithful evangelism. The study is therefore offered as a contribution to ecumenical discussion of certain crucial problems of faith which arise as the churches undertake their task of evangelism.

The questions with which the study deals are the following:

What is evangelism and how does the evangelistic compulsion arise? What is the importance of a theological reflection on the Christian calling to evangelise?

What is the authority for evangelism? What authority does the evangelist have for intruding into other people's lives? What "credentials" must the Church have as evidence of the fact that it actually possesses the authority to call men to obedience to Jesus Christ? What is the

urgency of evangelism in relation to the work of Christ among men, in relation to death, in relation to the final end?

There is an evangelistic dimension to every form of Christian witness. What is the significance of this fact and how may it be understood?

What changes in the structure of church life are required by the task of evangelism today?

Ultimately Christ alone is the evangelist, not man; yet men feel the compulsion to evangelize. Thus arises the dilemma of the evangelist. How does one plan to do something which he ultimately does not do; and what does this mean for the content and method of evangelism? What methods of "successful" evangelism should not be used because they are incongruous with the Gospel?

It will be seen that the study does not pretend to offer a systematic treatment of the theology of evangelism, but rather is concerned with the specific problems which, in the experience of the Department, are the most important for the evangelistic work of the churches today.

"A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism" was produced in first draft by a study conference, held in March of 1958. It has been circulated widely, and many criticisms have been sent in - indicating a good participation, in the member churches, in the study process. The Working Committee of the Department revised the document thoroughly in the light of these criticisms at its meeting last summer.

STUDY ON THE WORD OF GOD AND THE LIVING FAITHS OF MEN

The study of "The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men" has been undertaken jointly by the Department on Evangelism and the Department of Missionary Studies. It is a study of the Word of God in relation to the great non-Christian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam) in their present forms and expressions.

The last ecumenical study of "the relationship of Christianity and the non-Christian religions" was in connection with the International Missionary Council meeting at Tambaram in 1938, that is, over twenty years ago. The so-called "Tambaram debate", precipitated by Professor Hendrick Kraemer's book, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, was cut short by the coming of World War II and was not renewed in a significant way after the war. In the West the study and discussion has lacked a real focus. There are a number of reasons for this situation. Among them are the following: First, there is a great uncertainty and hesitation in the minds of many as they approach the subject. Second, "theology" has tended to become separated from "communication". That is,

there are those who are primarily concerned with, say, the relation of "Gospel" and "religion", and there are others whose primary concern is how to communicate the Christian faith to non-Christian religious men. Because of their preoccupations they seldom engage one another on the same issues. Third, there is, as far as we can see, no systematic and articulated position which either effectively challenges Professor Kraemer's position or comes to terms with his major concerns. Finally, there is a continuing isolation among those who might together engage in the study.

During the twenty years since Tambaram tremendous changes have taken place in Asia and Africa. A commission of the East Asia Christian Conference recently spoke in these terms: "Asian conditions have changed beyond all recognition since Tambaram. Modern Asian man is concerned with revolutionary plans for the remaking of society, for the realization of personal values and the achievement of specific national goals in present history. He is searching for spiritual foundations for this new world in the making and he does not always find the needed dynamic of faith in the traditional religion of his fathers. Modern religious movements in the historic religions of Asia stand for two things - on the one hand, there are indications of the crises brought about by the inadequacy of traditional and theological beliefs; on the other hand, they represent efforts to recover the support of faith by a radical renewal of beliefs in terms of present-day demands and needs."

For the past several years we have been trying to see how to renew the study of our subject in a way that is faithful, fresh, and relevant. In the West we have made little progress, partly for the reasons indicated above. Recently a decision was made to turn more directly to Asia for the formulation of the study. An EACC commission was asked to give its views about how the study should be approached in Asia and, also, to propose a concrete study program in Asia.

The EACC commission proposed that "the approach should be from the Christian understanding of the nature and destiny of man", that is, an anthropological approach. It further suggested four aspects of a study:

a) The search for new foundations in non-Christian religions as reflected by the values that modern man in Asia accepts and seeks to realize.

b) The biblical understanding of man and society in comparison with changing non-Christian concepts as revealed in the prevailing forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc., in Asian society.

c) The creative interaction of changing social ideals and renascent religious beliefs on each other, which makes it compellingly necessary for us to study all Asian religions, including our own, with reference to Asian society.

d) The imperative need for relating the insights of this study to the everyday life of the local congregations of Christians in our lands so that they may courageously venture in their patterns of life and witness to steer clear of the perils of ghettoism on the one hand and the danger of syncretism on the other.

The EACC commission further proposed that a series of consultations, organized jointly by the World Council of Churches and the EACC, be held in various parts of Asia during 1960. These consultations would study the particular religions in terms of the approach indicated above. It is likely that consultations will be held in the Middle East, India, Ceylon-Burma, Indonesia, and Hong Kong-Singapore. In most cases they will be held in connection with the various "centers for the study of the non-Christian religions" which have been established through the co-operation of the International Missionary Council and the various National Christian Councils. The consultations will be followed by a meeting in Asia of the study committee which will have the task of taking account of the work of the consultations and of preparing for the study and discussion of this subject in the "Witness" section of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

WORLD EVANGELISM SERIES

Additional titles have been added to this series of pamphlets on Evangelism. The full list now available is as follows:

Resurgent Religions, S.Kulandran
Evangelism in Latin America, Rudolf Obermüller
Evangelism in Germany, H.-H. Ulrich
Evangelism in the United States, George Sweazey
Evangelism and Politics, Philippe Maury

These pamphlets, which are published by the Lutterworth Press, are available from the W.C.C. headquarters at the price of Sw.Frs.1.20 each.

MONTHLY LETTERS

The Department urgently solicits monthly letters from its readers. We need letters of about the length of this one, which describe concrete work done in evangelism.

We need also the names of people who are engaged in evangelistic work that might be of interest to others. We ask our readers to help by sending us letters, or by sending us names of people whom we might ask to write letters. Enclosed is a list of the titles of the letters published so far.

World Council of Churches
Division of Studies
DEPARTMENT ON EVANGELISM

March 1958

A MONTHLY LETTER ABOUT EVANGELISM

The Department on Evangelism has published the following Monthly Letters about Evangelism:

1956			
No.1	France	Industrial Evangelism	Pasteur Henri Ochsenbein
2	Uruguay	Radio Evangelism	Rev. Eugene L. Stockwell
3	Ceylon	Evangelism among Veddahs	Sevak I.T. Yesusahayam
4	Australia	Mission to the Nation	Rev. Alan Walker
5	Lebanon	The Christian Educator and the Task of Evangelism	Dr. Charles Malik
6	England	Prison Evangelism	Rev. G. Fraser Thompson
7	Holland	The Open Door	Rev. G.P. Klijn
8	France	Evangelising the Workers?	Pasteur J.-P. Benoit
9	Bolivia	Pressures on the Evangelist in an area of Rapid Social Change	Rev. Emilio Castro
No.1	India	Mission to the Gonds of India	Sister Rachel John
2	England	Mission of Friendship	Ripon Hall Report
3	Germany	Churches also need Kirchentags	Dr. Wilhelm Imhoff
4	Thailand	Evangelistic Venture in North Thailand	Rev. E. John Hamlin
5	USA	The Church Becomes Good News	East Harlem Prot.Parish
6	Indonesia	A Story from the Batak Church	Dr. L. Schreiner
7	Geneva	A General Letter	Evangelism Department
8	Switzerland	Church Marriage Counsel and Evangelism	Dr.med. B. Harnik
9	England	The Village Evangelists	Rt.Rev. George Sinker
10	New Zealand	Evangelism in the Purari Delta Papua / New Guinea	Rev. Les.W. Allen
1958			
No.1	Holland	Modern Evangelistic Methods in an old Parish of Rotterdam	Rev.G. van Veldhuizen
2	Italy	The Waldensian Church	Anneke and Mario Musacchio
3	Argentine	A Letter from a Teacher	Rev. Edward W. Graefe
4	Geneva	House Churches in Europe	Rev. E.H. Robertson
5	Scotland	"Word for Living" Broadcast	Rev. Smellie
6	USA	The Problem of Narcotics Addiction	Group of New York
7	Belgium	Letter from a Catholic Priest	------
8	Philippines	Industrial Evangelism in Asian Areas	
9	USA	Preaching-Teaching-Reaching Evangelism	Dr. Conrad M. Thompsen

P.T.O.

1959			
1	Bolivia	Evangelism amonst the Indios	Rosita Shehirlian
2	England	Newspaper Evangelism	Mr. Hickman
3	Germany	Telephone Ministry	Dr. Thomas
4	Nigeria	Evangelism in the Nupe Church	Rev. P. Lapage
5	England	Telephone Evangelism and Counselling	Rev. Bourne
6	Formosa	Evangelism among the mountain tribes	Dr. MacMillan